

October 6, 2011

Epicurean Charitable Foundation: Indulging for a good cause

The clouds might have been hovering, but on Sept. 30 the Epicurean Charitable Foundation of Las Vegas held its 10th annual scholarship fundraiser, M.E.N.U.S. (Mentoring & Educating Nevada's Upcoming Students), at the M Resort Spa & Casino's pool for a dinearound followed by a live concert by Lifehouse.

Celebrity chefs and upscale restaurants offered an abundance of delectable treats.

Chef Steven Benjamin of Atelier Robuchon located in MGM Grand Hotel and Casino presented a gazpacho enhanced by a pork belly. Vincent Pouessel of Aureole in Mandalay Bay added to the cuisine with a hot sausage creation. Union in Aria offered rib buns and Jidori chicken dumplings. The stunning Carla Pellegrini of Bacio in Tropicana Las Vegas showed off her specialty creating an incredible pasta dish.

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For continuing gourmet faire, Jean-Georges in Aria offered a steak with Miso butter and Maitake mushrooms along with a foie gras topped with onion marmalade. Comme Ca at the Cosmopolitan had executive chef Brian Howard serving Hamachi tartare with black truffle perfume, lime curd and sesame brittle. Olives at Bellagio featured chicken satay and bruschetta.

Comfort food included chicken bits from Chef Todd Harrington of Central in Caesars Palace, sliders served by chef Kerry Simon of KGB Burgers in Harrah's Las Vegas, and jalapeno sausage by reknowned pitmaster, Keith Schmidt of Kreuz Market for Lynyrd Skynyrd BBQ & Beer (due to open at the Excalibur Hotel and Casino). Prime beef sliders on pretzel bread was the featured item from the new 35 Steaks + Martinis (Hard Rock Hotel and Casino) and diners could select house-made chips, tacos and ceviche from Pink Taco, also in the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino. Rice & Company of Luxor enticed the crowd with spicy tuna and lettuce wraps.

For dessert, there was Payard in Caesars Palace featuring a pumpkin mousse with could be paired with Sambalatte (in Boca Park) fine coffee. Alessandro Stoppa of Valentino in the Venetian cooled the crowd with smooth gelato. Cheesecake truffles with cotton candy from Johnny Smalls of the Hard Rock Hotel tempted the crowd. Pastry chef Megan Romano of Aureole in Mandalay Bay shared her incredible chocolate creations.

Southern Wine & Spirits and Wirtz Beverage Nevada featured libations by Ambhar Tequila, Bacardi, Ultimat Vodka, Patron, Red Stripe, and Coors beer.

ECF's annual M.E.N.U.S. event raises money toward awarding scholarships in the hospitality industry for students who demonstrate strong academic performance and financial need. For more information, visit www.ecflv.com.

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